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Forest Service



Volumes 53-54  
No. 2  
1992-93

# Fire Management Notes



# Fire Management Notes

An international quarterly periodical devoted to forest fire management

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service



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**Front Cover:** Forest Service firefighter-artist Elena Rios' charcoal and conte crayon drawing entitled "Burning Snag." Rios, a member of the Los Padres Hotshots in Santa Barbara, CA, synthesized a variety of firefighting experiences in this drawing. (See article, page 14.) Photo credit: Ed Gornowski, Los Padres National Forest.



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# People—Fire Managers Must Talk With Them

Arthur W. Magill

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Fire managers know the wildland-urban interface fire problem is a "people" problem, but recognizing the problem and addressing it in ways that are apt to cause interface residents to change their behavior are two different things. The interface fire problem demands that managers deal with people in special ways. Fire prevention in the interface, like recreation management, depends upon managers knowing who they are serving and being involved in effective two-way communication with them. Lives and property protection depend on it.

## Putting Out Safety Information—Does It Help Much?

Fire managers recommend to people who move into the wildland-urban interface that they fireproof or build firesafe homes and protect them with defensible space (Davis 1990; McLean 1992). They stress the need to avoid building with wood shingles, open-furred roofing, fiberglass skylights, unscreened soffit vents, unboxed eaves, and overhanging decks, as well as landscaping with fireprone vegetation and having vegetation and debris next to buildings (Bradshaw 1987). Yet, they are continually frustrated by residents who apparently do not hear or heed their warnings and recommendations. Why, when taking action to protect their homes from wildfire seems obvious, do most people fail to comply with firesafe procedures?

## What Are the Barriers?

### Are We Adequately Educating Fire Managers How To Communicate the Wildland-Urban Interface

### Fire Safety Messages Effectively?

*Fire Management Notes*, a long-established magazine directed to the wildland firefighting community and distributed to 3,000 offices or individuals, offers a clue about interests and values. Articles in *Fire Management Notes* suggest that manager interests have been traditionally captured by "things" such as planning, interagency coordination, fire behavior, suppression, enforcement, strategies and tactics, and various technological devices. In articles about the wildland-urban interface that beg for discussion of how managers communicated with people, there are only hints and glimpses of how managers and communities interact and the relative success of those exchanges (Bailey 1991; Manning 1990). In a major article reporting survey findings on problems, solutions, and priorities of fire managers, communication with the public wasn't even a survey item (Phillips and George 1991). *Fire Management Notes* has published one article in which the methods and success of a program to communicate the wildland-urban interface fire safety message was reported (Jolly 1991). In fact, the category of "communication" (other than information systems) was included for the first time in the index of volume 52 (1991).

**Are We Delivering Our Message to the People We Need To Communicate With?** In 1988, a workshop, "Firesafe California: Survival by Design," was held to educate groups such as homeowners, architects and landscape architects, builders, developers and realtors, bankers, insurance carriers, planners, and

various state and local officials along with fire managers and fire prevention personnel, about fire safety in the wildland-urban interface and to encourage groups to take action to improve safety. Even though more than 50 such persons were invited, less than 10 attended. The majority of attendees were fire people, so the fire safety message was discussed among those already familiar with it—firefighters talking to firefighters.

**Are We Delivering Our Message Effectively?** Fire managers and other natural resource professionals tend to "talk" more about public involvement than they involve themselves in it. For the most part, evidence of this preference by managers is subtle and is depicted by actual behavior as contrasted with professed behavior. For example, one fire manager wrote in *Fire Management Notes* about wildland-urban interface problems and how to solve them. He rightly advocated educating the people living in fireprone areas about the need for building firesafe structures and creating defensible space (Bailey 1991). However, his focus was more on resolving interagency problems, knowing your counterpart in other agencies, and improving interagency communication than on involving the public. Improving interagency operations is a valid goal, but greater emphasis on working directly with the public may be more important.

Another fire professional emphasized giving attention to firefighter training, equipment, mutual aid and cooperation, subdivision and home design, new building materials, and research—if it included educational programs on subdivision and home

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design (Bethea 1987). Sociological research, ironically, was considered unnecessary, even though to develop the educational programs that were championed such research is basic.

In a fire manager's proposal outlining roles for management, staff, and the public, the responsibility to "get the public involved" is relegated to community leaders (Bailey 1991). Again, this recommendation suggests that fire managers would rather not deal with the public, but abdicate that responsibility to somebody else, in this case, community leaders.

### **Behavior—What Blocks Making Changes?**

**Homeowners.** Communicating with homeowners about impending disaster is not easy. People tend to respond poorly to warnings and be oblivious to events that can have a disastrous influence on their property and lives. For example, people who experiment with drugs do not "choose" to become drug addicts. They assume "they will not get hooked," that "nothing like that could happen to me" (Duster 1970). Duster also identified this attitude in soldiers on the battlefield who, when all about them are dying, simply "know" they will survive.

Many people who live in areas of high environmental hazard, much like Duster's soldiers, deny the danger, although there is a range in denial intensity and coping mechanisms. Some occupants of flood plains, for example, believe they are excluded from flooding—"it can't happen to me"—whereas others' behavior demonstrates coping with the percep-

tion that flooding is a frequent event (Craik 1970). Some people deny the environment is hazardous, others become accustomed and less aware of the hazards, and some accept the hazards believing technology will ultimately eliminate them (Preston and others 1983). Even with knowledge of environmental hazards, some people will purchase homes in areas subject to earthquakes and floods (Sims and Baumann 1983). Home size, architecture, and location apparently are much more important to them than the hazards of the areas. These are a few examples of the bewildering nonchalant behavior fire managers confront when trying to convince homeowners, developers, and builders to use firesafe principles in the wildland-urban interface.

Several conditions serve to increase the difficulty of conveying fire safety messages. The formula, "education causes awareness causes desired behavior," is a myth: Information sent may not be received, and if received, it is not necessarily followed (Sims and Baumann 1983). For example, people who have experienced hurricanes were found to develop higher "thresholds" of tolerance than those who have not, and experienced people are less likely to respond to warnings (Sims and Baumann 1983). Of course some information is received and used, but the evidence indicates minimal exchange and consequent behavior.

People also have been found "acutely aware of persistent hazards" like smog and crime, but infrequent events, such as floods and earthquakes, tend to elicit less awareness (Preston and others 1983). Furthermore, sensational events—like floods

and fires—attract considerable attention, while more mundane events—those involving nonfatal injuries—may be given little attention. Added to the various barriers to achieving the desired behavior is the fact that over half of the people in the United States move every 5 years (Laska 1990). Thus, if fire managers, by chance, succeed in changing the behavior of homeowners in an area, new ones will move in, and efforts must be repeated.

**Industry.** Developers, builders, architects, and landscape architects, like any good entrepreneurs, continually seek new and better ways to turn a profit. Clearly, they are aware that people want nice homes in attractive locations. All of the professionals are people first, so they are subject to the same foibles and misconceptions as homeowners with regard to underestimating or not recognizing interface fire hazards. Apparently, developers and "spec" builders are aware that home size, architecture, and location are important to homeowners. They recognize that people move to the interface to escape urban problems, to enjoy the "freedom" of the country, and to gain environmental quality including a good view and surrounding trees and shrubs. These construction professionals pursue the opportunity to gain a profit by providing attractive homes in the wildland-urban interface. Unfortunately, homes that satisfy the locational, architectural, and landscape dreams of potential buyers are too often those that contribute to the interface fire problem.

**Government.** Community plans frequently do not address the interface

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fire issue, and local governments have been unable or unwilling to enact ordinances that control development and construction (National Fire Protection Association 1987). The unwillingness of governments to enact fire legislation may be related to an avoidance by politicians to be associated with actions that may be viewed unfavorably by their constituency (Sampson 1991).

**Insurance Companies.** Claim payments for property destroyed by wildfire cost insurance companies millions of dollars each year. Most of these losses could be avoided if homeowners followed the “proper mitigating measures to protect their homes from the threat of wildfires” (Riley 1991). Riley suggests that insurance companies should evaluate a structure’s risk to determine rate cost. Lower rates could be charged homeowners who reduce risk by adapting to firesafe road designs, architectural designs, and building materials or do not live in high-risk areas.

### **How Do We Overcome the Barriers?**

**Identify Community Leaders.** Gaining the support of community leaders has definite merit, though identifying them may not be easy. Overlapping cliques are comprised of key individuals who make local community decisions (Mills 1956). Often the driving force behind programs may be one person, residing in the background, who “gets an idea” that is then championed by other, more visible persons. It is the “background” leaders in each community

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### **Why, when taking action to protect their homes from a wildfire seems obvious, do most people fail to comply with firesafe procedures?**

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that fire managers should seek, for their support would appear essential to the success of fire safety programs.

#### **Send Credible Messages.**

People—whether homeowners, design and construction professionals, or public officials—are more likely to be enticed to participate in fire safety programs if the following conditions are met:

- Clear messages given by credible individuals who specify necessary actions
- Messages reinforced locally—preferably by background leaders or influential groups

Listeners may regard media warnings as “informational” only, unless they are perceived as coming from an authoritative source (Sims and Baumann 1983). Fire managers should be considered the credible authorities on interface wildfires. They are especially effective as authorities if they have established themselves as credible authorities in a community by—

- Becoming directly involved with public education and involvement programs (which means establishing dialogue with the people who live or plan to live in hazardous areas)
- Soliciting the help of community leaders through dialogue to fortify the meaning and importance of their messages

To achieve public involvement, managers should start with home-

owners and potential homeowners, because they are the ones seeking better living conditions and providing the basis for an industrial profit motive.

Lack of favorable response to warnings of environmental hazards, including fire (as pointed out earlier) has been discouraging (Perry and Lindell 1990; Sims and Baumann 1983). Nevertheless, a few factors have proven useful for warning of imminent hazards. Effective warnings are—

- Clear
- Specific for the desired response
- Derived from a credible source
- Reinforced locally
- Conveyed by a positive message on primetime television. Primetime television is espoused to be the most effective medium, if the message is positive (Sims and Baumann 1983).

Knowledgeable people are most likely to respond favorably to environmental threats, but programs that use fear to emphasize risk and danger without adequate explanations tend to be unsuccessful (Perry and Lindell 1990). People may endure economic losses, high stress, greater health risks, and severe disruptions in their lives as a result of floods, fires, or other disasters and only regard these impacts as “misfortune” (Rochford and Blocker 1991).

#### **Use the Fly Fishing Model.**

Multicultural recreation research, in southern California, has presented communication as a process where the participants share information. However, the sharing approach may be foreign to natural resource managers whose objectives lead to communica-



tion "in terms of getting a job done" (Hodgson and others 1990). In other words, managers may be more interested in "selling" their goals to customers than engaging in the two-way communication necessary for effective marketing. Marketing firesafe development means that managers must participate in two-way communication that enables them to learn more about the goals of homeowners and to structure messages that address homeowner goals as well as reducing losses to fire.

The effectiveness of marketing may be improved by using the "fly fishing" model of communication. According to the model, managers should "prepare messages of the kind the receiver looks for" and should "deliver them where, when, and how they would be expected" (Hodgson and others 1990). Accomplishing this, again, requires increased knowledge of user cultures that may differ from the resource protection orientation of wildland fire managers. Gaining such knowledge should enhance the dialogue necessary between fire managers and concerned persons if managers are to refine and redirect their messages to improve their chance for success (Bradshaw 1992).

### **Working It Out: Talking to People**

The need to work with homeowners, to recognize and address business profit motives, and to identify and gain the support of background leaders may pose barriers to effective fire safety programs. Barriers may fall, however, if fire managers resist dealing with "things," overcome their reluctance to be

directly involved with citizen involvement programs, and establish two-way communication with the people they wish to influence. Achieving these goals is more likely if fire managers pursue continuing education in the social sciences and other disciplines that emphasizes interpersonal and multicultural relations and communication strategies.

Fire managers must confront construction professionals as well as homeowners. If people prefer certain architectural and landscaping styles rather than those that are firesafe, then it behooves managers to encourage architects and landscape architects to develop and use alternative designs and materials that are not only firesafe, but have the aesthetic qualities homeowners desire. Fire managers also need to work with the building materials industry to develop more fire-resistant coatings and designs for wooden building components as well as other firesafe alternatives that are aesthetically pleasing. The roofing industry may have inadvertently taken the lead by providing an extensive selection of attractive roofing material that also is firesafe. Other industries may be enticed to follow this lead, provided an increase in profits can be demonstrated.

The communication effort also needs to target county planners, other local public officials, and legislators to develop guidelines, set policy, and pass ordinances that improve fire safety. Insurance carriers need to be included in this dialogue—to explore and create policy incentives that support local fire safety plans and ordinances. ■

## **Changing Behavior and Making a Difference**

To make a difference in fire safety in the wildland-urban interface, both fire managers and homeowners need to take action—shifting and adjusting their usual ways of doing business. Fire managers need to examine their—

- Reluctance to be directly involved with citizen involvement programs, working with people who hold differing viewpoints, and initiating social interaction with those in the community
- Lack of political experience necessary for effective interaction with local and community leaders
- Wariness of abstract concepts and alternative solutions (Magill 1988)

They need to exchange these attitudes and responses and build mutually beneficial relationships with the people they serve:

- Homeowners
- Construction professionals—architects, landscape architects, developers, builders, and building materials researchers and developers
- Community leaders, county planners and other local officials, and legislators
- Insurance and financial industries

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## ***Fire Management Notes— Looking for a Few Good Ideas***

**From the Inside Out.** As this issue of *Fire Management Notes* (FMN) goes to press, the FMN general manager Fran Russ is assembling a group to examine the goals for the magazine and how those goals are achieved. For the past three years, FMN has made a concerted effort to improve itself in small, but important ways: better communication with authors; more exacting definition of technical terms; easier access to information through the use of highlights, breakout background paragraphs, detailed information in

headings, and development of or focus on themes or topic areas.

**Mostly Up to You.** In some form, the FMN group will be in touch with a few of you—to find out what topics tweak your interest. What articles, for instance, have helped you understand an operation more clearly, helped you work more safely and efficiently, guided you to training opportunities you did not know of before, encouraged you to push toward excellence, or just made you feel good about being a part of the firefighting community?

**On Our Way.** This review will touch on topics covered, the depth and style of coverage, use of illustrations, and the graphic presentation of

material. Recently, we improved our production system—editing electronically so that the magazine can move from manuscript directly into page—a first step toward timely information in a timely production framework.

**Send the Word.** If you have ideas or long and carefully concealed wishes for FMN, this is the time to share them. Write or call Fran Russ, general manager, 202–205–0891; DG:W01C or Doris Celarier, writer-editor, 202–205–1020; DG:W01B at 201 14th Street SW, Washington, DC 20250. ■

**Doris N. Celarier, writer-editor,  
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# Public Involvement in Fire Management

Valerie Chambers

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Fire management in the Forest Service and other agencies today looks a whole lot different than it used to. It's not just about stamping out forest fires in the most expeditious way possible. Instead, fire management, like so many other government programs, has come under intense scrutiny from a well-educated and sophisticated public. People's expectations are higher now than they once were. Concerns such as protecting ecosystems; the economic burden of fire suppression; the goals of State, local, and tribal governments; air quality; the urban-wildland interface; global warming—you name it—now bear considerably on our fire management programs.

Fire managers cannot afford to rest on the laurels of a successful and decades-old fire suppression program. Managers need to move at times from the public information end of the continuum to true public involvement where the public is engaged with us in dialogue about larger societal questions: How much fire suppression and at what cost? How do we preserve national "shrines" like Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks for human enjoyment without compromising ecological integrity? What do we need to forgo (for example, some level of air quality for a reduction in fuels in the urban-wildland interface) in order to protect something, or can we have both?

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Special thanks to Jerilyn Levi, program analyst, USDA Forest Service, Fire and Aviation Management, Washington, DC, and Barbara Kennedy, public affairs officer, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region, Mt. Hood National Forest, Gresham, OR, for assistance with this article.

## **Learning by Listening—and Talking: The Tok Fire**

Although thousands of fires occur annually in Alaska and many grow to be large fires, most are in remote locations. In July 1990, the Alaska Division of Forestry knew that the Tok Fire, more complex than most, would be in the spotlight. The fire, which grew to over 96,000 acres (38,851 ha), was located near the communities of Tok and Tetlin at the junction of two major highways thousands of tourists travel during the summer enroute to vacation destinations in Alaska and Canada.

### **Involvement During a Fire.**

While firefighters were out on the fire, representatives from the community of Tok, the Tetlin Native Corporation, and State and Federal organizations including the Alaska Division of Forestry, the USDA Forest Service, and the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management all provided real-time input into the management of this large fire.

**Much at Stake.** The small communities of Tok and Tetlin had much at stake. Residents worried about threats to homes and businesses and potential damage from the fire and fire suppression activities to subsistence fishing, trapping, and hunting. The situation was complicated further by the need to evacuate Tetlin, a remote town threatened by the spread of a fire front several miles wide.

**"Get the Public Involved," Said the Incident Command Team.** Early on, the Incident Command Team asked the public for its input. Public involvement was managed by the team through two existing planning

processes: the revision and update of an Escaped Fire Situation Analysis and the development of a Fire Rehabilitation Plan. Individuals from the community and representatives from local agencies voiced their concerns and were encouraged to work with the operations and planning team members. Within several days of the Incident Commander's arrival, the team, with considerable input from the public, developed action alternatives, analyzed potential outcomes, and selected a preferred alternative. Residents and tourists were kept informed about the fire through factsheets, news articles, and photographs placed by the incident information staff at a popular visitor center along the Alcan Highway.

The Incident Commander used a community leader from Tetlin to identify issues, advise on Alaskan native culture and special environmental conditions (such as permafrost), and distribute information to residents.

**Was It Worth It?** The interaction between the community and fire managers served to lessen anxiety and misinformation and create greater trust between the local communities and land managers. In this case, public involvement was about gathering valuable information from residents, but even more importantly, about building relationships—with payoff both during the fire and for long afterwards.

## **How To Involve the Public More in Planning and Decisionmaking.**

**Local Groups.** What can fire managers do to involve the public more in planning and decisionmaking?

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**Do we have time on a big project fire to do public involvement? Or any other time of the year? What's the payoff?**

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For starters, it's not necessary to reinvent the wheel or pack out the Grange hall once a month. Critical relationships built during fire season—with the State forestry department, local fire departments, county commissioners, sheriff's office, and homeowners' associations—can be fostered the rest of the year as managers plan fuel reduction and silvicultural treatments, preseason training, and fire prevention activities. Local people who were overjoyed at the arrival of yellow- and green-clad firefighters the summer before may want to stop by the office and comment on fire management plans during the winter or even participate in training sessions or in a critique of the previous season's activities. So keep the door open. Some preseason agreements and decisions can be reached with involvement from communities. This can help prevent those uncomfortable situations when people suddenly show up at the base wanting to "fight fire" and have to be turned away.

#### **Interest Groups in Urban Areas.**

Interest groups in the cities also have a stake in public lands such as the national and State forests and parks, and wildlife refuges. They would probably like to know about planning meetings. All it takes is a telephone call to a contact in an interested group to determine if its members would like periodic updates or to be involved in some way.

## **Understanding the Social and Political Dimension**

Fire managers need to have a sense of the historical, political, and social context of fire management if they are to plan programs that meet with public support:

- Brush up on your Stephen Pyne—read or reread his "Fire in America," an excellent overview of fire management history in the Forest

Service and a discussion of ever-changing social and political forces in society.

- Look at mass media coverage of fires and fire management issues.
- Engage in policy discussions with the public to help broaden the level of understanding.
- Learn about the human dimension of ecosystems in your local area by taking the time to talk with residents about cultural considerations and historical relationships.

What do managers gain from better relationships and dialogue with the public? For one, an informed and active citizenship is to our advantage if we are to successfully carry out programs in the public's interest. "Partners," both public and in the agency, are needed to fund fire management, to gather important information, to solve problems, and to foster public support for fire management programs. We lay the groundwork for these partnerships by getting out in the communities, listening to people's concerns, and encouraging them to be involved in helping define and solve the problem. So often, we lay out the problem and charge ahead

with a program to fix it, when a few telephone calls to key contacts in the community might confirm that there's not really a problem or that some other approach would cost less and work a lot better.

State-of-the-art fire management requires much more than money and advanced technology. Public involvement, along with an understanding of the social and political dimension, is a logical and important part of modern-day fire management that we can't do without. Done with the purpose of listening to and learning from the public and of building long-term relationships, the payoffs are substantial. ■



## Handtool Sharpening Gauge

**Gets Rid of Guesswork in Handtool Sharpening.** The handtool sharpening gauge, developed by the Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) in 1992, is a guide to the proper cutting angle for a number of firefighting tools: the Pulaski (both ends), axe, shovel, combination tool, and McLeod. For the Pulaski, it also has a "no-go" line that shows when the head is too worn to refurbish. By using the gauge, tool blades are inspected and sharpened more accurately and conveniently.

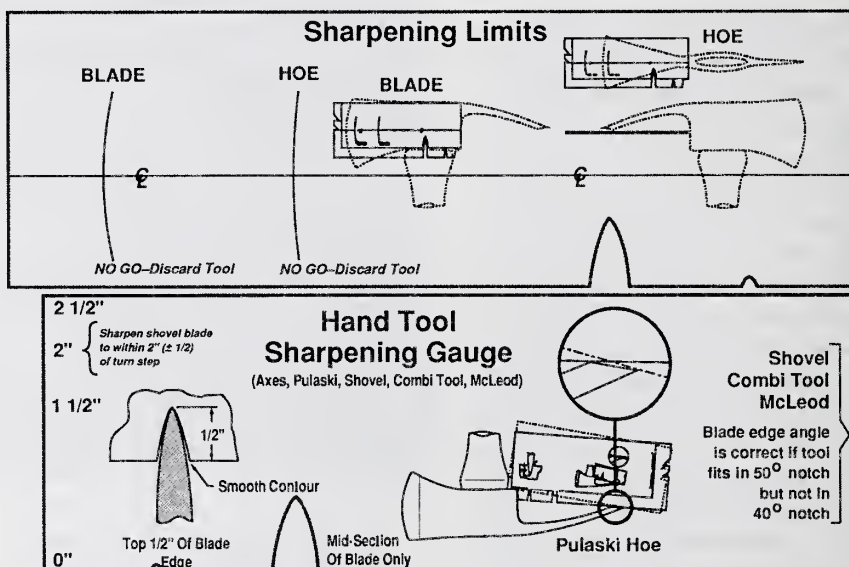
**Convenient.** The gauge weighs 4 1/2 ounces (142 gm) and measures 3 by 8 inches (7.5 by 20.32 cm), an easy-to-carry size and weight for using in the field.

**Where To Use.** The gauge is ideal for caches, fire camps, or wherever large-scale sharpening operations are conducted. The idea for the sharpening gauge originated in 1988 among cache managers and others looking for a fast, accurate way to refurbish tools.

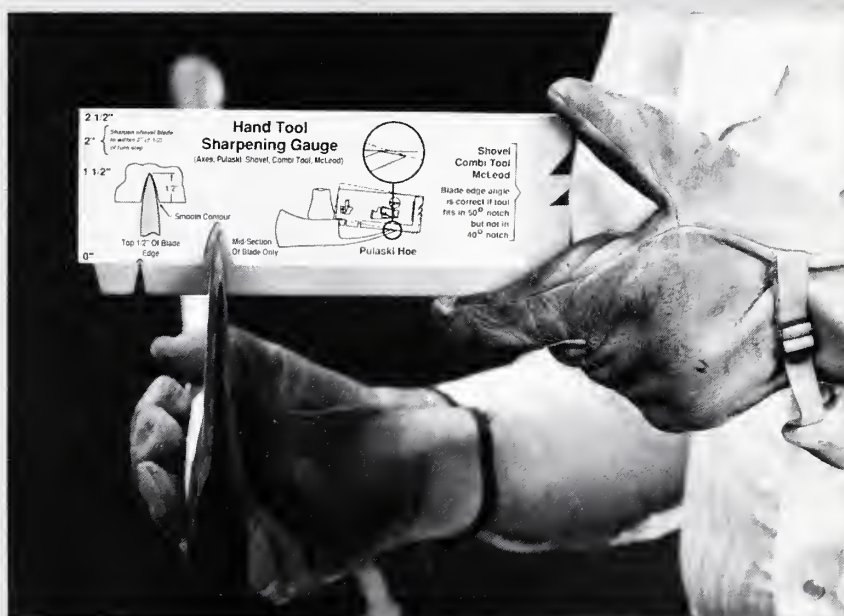
**Where To Obtain More Information:** Bob Hensler, project leader, Missoula Technology and Development Center, Building 1, Fort Missoula, Missoula, MT 59801; telephone (commercial and FTS)—406-329-3929; DG—B.Hensler:R01A.

**How To Purchase.** General Services Administration: individually, in a box of 10, and a case of 100 (10 boxes to a case) at a unit price of \$6.39. (Unit price remains the same regardless of number purchased.) NSN 5210-01-324-2776, NFES 0510. ■

**Bob Hensler,** project leader, Missoula Technology and Development Center, Missoula, MT



**Figure 1**—Both sides of the handtool sharpening gauge: One side shows the proper cutting angle; the other, the limits of sharpening.



**Figure 2**—Gauge is used to check mid-section of blade. Photo credit: Missoula Technology and Development Center, Hans Wilbrecht.





**Figure 3**—Gauge is used to check angle of hoe. Photo credit: Missoula Technology and Development Center, Hans Wilbrecht.



**Figure 4**—A Pulaski hoe is measured on the sharpening limits gauge. Photo credit: Missoula Technology and Development Center, Hans Wilbrecht.

Imagine Little  
Red Riding  
Hood without  
a forest.



PLEASE be very careful  
with matches. Because  
without the forests, life is  
unimaginable.

Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires.



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# Behind the Scene With an Incident Information Officer

Maryjane Cavaoli

*Supervisory public information technician, USDA Forest Service,  
Inyo National Forest, Mt. Whitney Ranger District, Lone Pine, CA*

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When the phone rings at 2 a.m. and the caller tells you to be at a fire 500 miles (805 km) away in 2 hours, the incident information officer, just like everyone else who battles a wilderness blaze, grabs a prepacked fire bag and a tent and heads for the door. But on the way out, the incident information officer also grabs a briefcase or two, crammed with everything past experience has taught is necessary, plus a still camera and a video camera, if available. Also taken is an extra fire bag stuffed with Forest Service uniforms to wear when working with the media, a battery-operated blow dryer guaranteed not to melt makeup, and whatever else is needed to be on-camera ready for television at any hour of the day or night.

Why? Because it is almost guaranteed the moment you arrive at the fire scene, someone from television news is going to thrust a camera in your face and start asking questions on a live, from-the-scene telecast before you have had time to glance at a map or an Incident Status Summary giving you current information on the fire.

## The Media and the Information Officer

My first experience with media relations on a fire was as a green incident information officer trainee, but I had been warned by more experienced friends in the field. So I managed to get through it without inserting my foot into my mouth or looking too camera shy. Actually, I didn't say much except that I had just arrived on the scene and, as soon as I had been briefed, I would get back to them. Fortunately, the fire was far from home, and the Action Newscast

was not the same one my family watches.

**Major Responsibilities.** The experience did make me immediately aware of the seriousness and responsibility an incident information officer position carries. Little jokes and asides are out of order here, because whatever you say goes out on the airwaves and you are going to have to live with it (maybe for the rest of your life and your children for generations to come). So are the Incident Commander and all the agencies involved with the fire. That is why you'll often hear, "I don't know, but I'll check it out and get back to you." Part of your responsibility is to make sure you do get back to the press, public, lawmakers, other agencies, or whoever else asks a question.

**Crucial Deadlines.** All media people have deadlines the incident information officer must consider if the officer is to maintain good working relationships with them. I recall sending a television news-woman to another location for some "good flame" footage. Right after she left, the fire blew up with "big flames" where I was with all the reporters who had been monitoring the radio. When she came back, all the excitement was over, and she screamed at me for spoiling her coverage and making her late for her deadline.

**"Burnout" Hazard.** To the uninitiated, the job sometimes looks glamorous. Your name gets in the newspapers, and your face appears on television. But in reality, there is a high burnout rate among incident information officers because of the demands. All public and media questions and concerns have to be

dealt with. Local lawmakers will want to know what's going on. You may have a congressional aide or even a member of Congress checking out the threat to his or her constituency. A wrong answer can create all kinds of problems.

**National Interest.** If a large fire threatens lives, structures, or popular landmarks, there will be public and media interest from outside the area. Often the incident information officer is asked to give live updates to radio stations by telephone. Much of what goes into the newspapers also comes from telephone interviews, and newspaper staff photographers seek your advice on good places to get shots. Television crews want action shots—lots of flames—and short, attention-getting quotes—the sound bites. You are expected to issue factual news releases that everyone in the media will want to develop into a story with a particular angle.

## Person to Person

Often when private property is at risk, the fire information center will be full of concerned citizens wanting to know if their homes or those of friends or relatives are at risk. Some people are going to be irate because of the danger, and others will be emotionally upset because everything they own is going up in smoke. The incident information officer has to deal with each individual sympathetically and in a professional way. During some fires causing severe damage to or even loss of private property, extra staff with counseling experience are brought in to help the public fill out insurance claim forms and deal with the over-

whelming emotions arising from the loss.

Morale of the firefighting staff is also a concern for the incident information officer. Often this involves producing an incident newsletter so crews can keep track of who's doing what on the fire, what's happening with the fire, current news events, and sports scores. Special cartooning talents are sought for the newsletter. Morale boosters and information sharing may also involve preparing bulletin board displays and handouts as well as making personal appearances in affected communities.

### **Command Staff Duties**

The incident information officer or an assistant attends planning and command staff meetings to get up-to-date information on the fire. Those facts are augmented by reports from field incident information officers who get updates frequently from the line and pass the information on. The Incident Commander has to give permission before any information can be given out to the media. The incident information officer's primary source of approved information is the Incident Status Summary (Incident Command System Form-209).

### **Running Interference**

Aside from getting the news out quickly and accurately and presenting the policies of the agency in control of the incident, an incident information officer's first priority is to run interference for the Incident Commander. For instance, the incident information officer must keep the media, the public, and elected officials

from distracting the Incident Commander. At the same time, an information avenue between the Incident Commander and these publics must be maintained. Being able to do this is the mark of an accomplished incident information officer.

Sometimes, incident information officers have to run interference with personnel on the fire who see the occasion of reporters interviewing them as a chance to air personal grievances. I was on a fire that was threatening a community inside a newly designated wilderness on one such occasion. The community members were upset because a large dozer firebreak had not been placed between their property and the wilderness. A newspaper reporter was interviewing fire personnel stationed in the area to protect structures. One employee used the occasion to start criticizing Federal fire suppression policies. It was not too long after the Yellowstone fires, so he got the reporter's full attention. I had to pick a moment I could break in and explain wilderness policies and the fact that a decision was currently being made on whether to construct the firebreak because of danger to the homes. Fortunately, my intervention defused the situation.

### **Handling Disasters**

**More Than Fire.** The information officer may perform duties at any incident involving the Incident Command System. An incident can be a fire, flood, hurricane, earthquake, hazardous material spill, serious traffic accident, or even a volcano. Since it is impossible for one individual to know

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**The moral of the story is never turn your back on a fire when talking to the news media.**

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everything the press or public is going to ask, the information officer's networking to build information sources for each type of event is an important part of preparation.

**View From the Trenches.** I asked several information officers to share experiences for this article. My favorite was a city fire department information officer who was on live television, his back to the fire, telling the interviewer that everything was under control. At the same time, the camera showed that the fire was building fast and was totally out of control. Indeed, a moment later, the information officer and the television crew had to run for it. The moral of the story is never turn your back on a fire when talking to the news media.

Another related "one of the funniest, most exciting things that happened" during one information officer's career. While serving on the Gorda-Rat Fire on the Los Padres National Forest near San Luis Obispo, CA, the incident information officer received a call from a Catholic monastery. The caller described the monastery's location, asked where the head of the fire was in relation to the monastery, and requested a recommendation on what to do. When the officer checked the incident map, he found that the monastery was in harm's way, directly in the path of a fast-moving 30,000-plus-acre (12,000 ha) fire. The officer's recommendation was to "get the hell out of there, not to



pack anything, not even a change of clothes but to leave immediately."

He then called the Incident Commander and reported the monastery's situation. The Incident Commander sent over a strike team of large city fire engines he had been unable to use on other areas of the fire but thought might work well for protecting the monastery. The strike team worked through the night, burning out around buildings and hosing down structures, and by daylight had saved the monastery.

Several days later, the incident information officer was approached at the fire information desk by a priest who told him he was the caller who

had been ordered to "get the hell out of the monastery." Embarrassed, the officer apologized for swearing. The priest replied that he felt the officer was the hero who had saved the monastery. The incident information officer told the priest all he did was call the Incident Commander and the strike team of engines had done the rest.

The priest then asked the incident information officer if he was a Catholic, or if he would like to become a Catholic. The officer politely declined. The priest then asked if the officer would like the priest to bless him, and the officer figured—it couldn't hurt.

## Impact on the Future

Humor aside, these stories reveal that the incident information officer plays a pivotal role in Incident Command and firefighting agencies' operations. As David Hanson stated in his *Fire Management Notes* article, "Command Staff Helps ICS Work" (volume 51, no. 2), "The way public information is handled on an incident can affect ongoing incident operations and the agency's ability to function in the future."

We need to fully recognize the need for and abilities of our incident information officers and the important position they occupy. ■

## Elena Rios and Her Brush With Fire

**Art Exhibit in the Washington Office.** For 2 weeks in April, Elena Rios brought to the Washington Office—the walkway to the Chief's Conference Room and to the Fire and Aviation Management and Public

Affairs Office offices in the Auditors Building—an artist's story of wildland firefighting told through an exhibit of her charcoal and mixed media drawings.

**The Artist, the Firefighter.** Rios, who received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1986 from the San Francisco Art Institute, is also a USDA Forest

Service firefighter who started in firefighting on the Sequoia National Forest after she had graduated from the institute. Currently, she is a member of the Los Padres Hotshots. At a fire, her sketchbook is never far away. She has participated in numerous art shows such as the 1990 La Hispana National Fine Arts Competition and Exhibition, Albuquerque, NM, where her entry was awarded first place.

Rios's exhibit came to Washington through the encouragement and actions of many people: Mark Linane, her Hotshot super-

intendent, for suggesting she develop an art exhibit of firefighting; the many staff members in the Los Padres Supervisor's Office in Goleta, CA, for helping in many ways, big and small; and former State and Private Forestry Deputy Chief Allan J. West for bringing the exhibit to Washington.

The usual details of wildland fire—the red and orange of wildfire, the equipment, and the people were there—yes—it was a fireline sense experience. But the exhibit offered something more—the fireline from a point of view: The ferocity of the flash and thunder of aircraft dropping retardant; the exhaustion of the resting firefighter whose large-booted foot looms forward toward the viewer; the strength in the eye of the female smokejumper. ■

**Doris N. Celarier**, writer-editor,  
USDA Forest Service, Public Affairs  
Office, Washington, DC



Elena Rios explaining one of her drawings in the art exhibit brought to the Washington Office in April. Photo credit: Jill Bauermeister, USDA Forest Service Washington DC.



# Another First—Human Resource Specialist Training at NARTC

Melanie Goss

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A diverse group of 26 individuals from the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior National Park Service (NPS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) attended the first Train-the-Trainers of Human Resource Specialists course at the National Advanced Resource Technology Center (NARTC) in Marana, AZ, on April 20–24, 1992.

Since 1988, human resource specialists have established themselves as vital members of the fire organization with a critical role in assisting colleagues during fire emergencies. Successful Incident Commanders and other fire managers have learned the value of these specialists and have effectively used their skills.<sup>1</sup> The NARTC course gave top specialists from all over the United States the opportunity to pool their ideas about this position. They and individuals new to the program together experienced a model course that could be used for future training.

This course was the culmination of several years' effort to plan and hold such training. While several Forest Service regions and State agencies have had human resource specialists on fire assignments since 1988, there had been no nationally recognized standard for training. A task force from the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management had recommended standardized training nearly 4 years before the first course was held. In 1990, then-Forest Service Deputy Chiefs for State and Private Forestry



*Human resource specialist trainees, making a small-group presentation at Train-the-Trainers of Human Resource Specialist course in Marana, AZ, in April 1992. Photo credit: Harry Croft, Fire and Aviation Management, Washington, DC.*

and Administration Allan J. West and William Rice, respectively, approved the task force's recommendation to construct a national-level training module to improve the effectiveness of the specialists and to stress the continuing need for these important members of the fire organization (USDA Forest Service 1990).

The human resource specialists in Marana represented a diverse cross-section of the workforce. Of the 26 students, 10 were from a professional series (predominantly foresters); 9 were from administrative fields (7 from personnel); 6 were technicians; and 1 was from the clerical support staff. All regions of the Forest Service were represented.

## Keynote Speech: "An Integral Part of . . . Team"

Former Deputy Chief Allan J. West gave the keynote address for the course on Monday evening. He clarified and reiterated both his and Forest Service Deputy Chief for Administration J. Lamar Beasley's support for the human resource specialist position. Specifically, he said, "I have a personal interest in and commitment to the creation and execution of the Human Resource Specialist Program as well as to this course in Marana. The human resource specialist is not just another fire camp specialist. . . . You are an integral part of the fire management team."

<sup>1</sup>See the article, "Human Resource Specialists in Action," *Fire Management Notes* 52(1):22-23, written by Melanie Goss.

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## Course Content and Presentation

Because the course was created to train students to return to their own agencies and train others to become human resource specialists, the instructors designed a course that could be used in the future. The instructors gave the students a 1-day overview of content and presentation style for such a course. (Normally, it would take 3 to 4 days to present the material.) Subjects included:

- The role of the human resource specialist
- Equal employment opportunity and civil rights policies and procedures
- Dealing with inappropriate behavior
- Working with other incident personnel

Following the overview, the instructors placed the students into smaller groups to develop their own

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## What is NARTC?

The National Advanced Resource Training Center (NARTC) is a recognized "graduate school" for national-level wildland fire training. The Chief of the Forest Service endorses all courses, which require that instructors maintain a high standard of excellence in both preparation and delivery. Both trainers and trainees are selected based on their experience and their dedication to course objectives.

While most NARTC courses are fire management related, many other resource topics are represented in the NARTC catalog: minerals, pesticide applications, lands, aviation, and burned-area rehabilitation. Nearly all courses are multiagency in attendance and training cadre.

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**The first Train-the-Trainers of Human Resource Specialists course, held at the National Advanced Resource Training Center April 20–24, gave top human resource specialists the opportunity to take the course some of them had helped develop along with individuals new to the program.**

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presentations on subjects such as those listed above. (The instructors tried to place students from different agencies and parts of the country into each group as well as experienced human resource specialists with those who had little training in this area.) Once a group had developed its "unit," members presented the material to the entire class. These presentations gave students an opportunity not only to practice teaching the course but also to view and experience a variety of teaching styles. After each group had finished teaching a unit, the instructors and students evaluated the presenters' content, organization, delivery, clarification of issues, and points emphasized. These critiques were intense, but constructive, and provided specific suggestions for improvement. In fact, because each subsequent group benefited from hearing the evaluations of the previous groups' presentations, delivery of the training material continuously improved.

## Guest Speakers

The course included a number of guest speakers. Mark Boche, forest supervisor, Malheur National Forest, and Gordon Reinhart, retired Type I Incident Commander, formed a panel

to give the perspective of a line officer and a national Incident Commander. They talked about the value of the human resource specialist position and what it has been like to work with human resource specialists. Both agreed the specialists are the critical link between incident employees and the Incident Management Team.

Another speaker, John Berger, Pacific Northwest Region mental health coordinator, provided a 4-hour session on critical incident stress debriefing (CISD), a process that helps victims deal with the aftershock of a traumatic event. This presentation oriented the students to the role of the human resource specialist in such critical areas as facilitating a debriefing. CISD has been used on many fire incidents to help personnel cope with such events as the loss of a firefighting colleague through death or suicide or a "near miss" from some kind of fire catastrophe.

Lonnie Lewis, regional vice president of the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), spoke about the role of the union representative and how that individual's work relates to the human resource specialist's responsibilities. Lewis pointed out each should be aware of the other's presence at the incident base and that they should strive toward cooperation in solving problems.

## The Future for the Course

This training course marked an important event in fire management history. The next important event would occur when the trainers conducted their own courses back at

## Major Contributors: Development of the Train- the-Trainers of Human Resource Specialists Course

- Harry Croft—Then-budget coordinator, Forest Service, Fire and Aviation Management, WO
- Jef Jefcoat—Equal opportunity assistant, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region
- Janet Anderson-Tyler—District ranger, Forest Service, Mt. Hood National Forest
- Donald Phillips—Forester, Forest Service, Lassen National Forest
- Lorrene Schardt—Management analyst, Bureau of Land Management
- Melanie Goss—Then-personnel officer, Forest Service, Lewis and Clark National Forest

their home units. At least one student reported that she was already scheduled to present a course in her region a few months later.

When will the next Train-the-Trainer course occur? A similar course will be scheduled as needed, probably not for several years following the Marana training. Because 26 individuals had been trained in 1992, it was now the agencies' responsibility to ensure that each has the opportunity to "carry the message" to others in his or her part of the United States.

Former Deputy Chief West finished his kickoff speech at the outset of the course by challenging the specialists to "pass on all the good training you are about to receive and continue to maintain the tradition you have

started." The trainers vowed to accept his challenge. ■

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Picture the Seven Dwarfs  
without a forest.



PLEASE put out all your campfires completely.  
Because a burnt forest is not a pretty picture.

Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires.



USDA Forest Service and your State Forester.

## Smokey Bear 1993 Campaign

The Smokey Bear public service announcements in this issue featuring Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, and the Seven Dwarfs are part of the 1993 Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention campaign. To be used in a campaign, the ads must be approved by the USDA Forest Service, National Association of State Foresters, and the Ad Council. Foote, Cone & Belding, Inc., is the volunteer agency that designed the ads.



# Smokey and the American Cowboy—Eastward Ho!

Rick Higginbotham and Marvin Dablemont

*Assistant ranger and forestry technician, USDA Forest Service, Mark Twain National Forest, Potosi/Fredricktown and Houston/Rolla Ranger Districts, respectively, Potosi and Houston, MO*



Although Missouri may not be thought of as a cowboy hotbed, it is home to some of the finest and most respected rodeos in the country. Since 1990, the Mark Twain National Forest in Rolla, MO, has been using some of these rodeos to deliver a special fire prevention message. The program is called "Smokey and the American Cowboy." The rodeo is one of America's oldest sporting events, with an annual paying audience rivaling that of professional football. Its popularity is increasing every year. Many rodeo competitors and fans are outdoor enthusiasts and frequent users of public lands, a perfect audience for fire prevention messages.

The Smokey and the American Cowboy public service program teams up two of our Nation's most recognizable symbols—Smokey and the cowboy—in a worthwhile cause, wildland fire prevention. The concept is simple. Through his partnership with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, Smokey Bear brings his "protecting America's heritage" message to the rodeo through public appearances, special rodeo theme promotional materials, and public service announcements.

## It Started With Gene Dowdy

The Smokey and the American Cowboy concept was the brainchild of former rodeo contestant Gene Dowdy, a long-time Forest Service employee and the program's first national director. The partnership Gene forged with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association is a natural. Although the program has been used throughout the West and has become a part of some



*Smokey Bear greets a rodeo audience, flanked by bull riders Charles Sampson and Ted Nuce. Photo credit: Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.*

of the most prestigious rodeos in the country, 1990 was the first time it has been used in the Eastern Region. The program is warmly received at some of the biggest (and smallest) rodeos in the United States.

## Tailoring the Fire Prevention Message to the Community

Approximately 40,000 acres (16,188 ha) in Missouri are consumed by wildfire every year, and the Smokey and the American Cowboy program helps get the fire prevention message to the outdoors crowd. This program, unlike some other prevention programs, allows each fire prevention officer to tailor a fire prevention message to the local people and local problems. A typical program can involve any or all of the following

program elements: Smokey Bear arena appearances; fire prevention displays; autograph parties with rodeo celebrities; free promotional materials; rodeo parade appearances; prerodeo visits to schools and shopping malls; poster and essay contests; and publicity through radio, television, and newspapers.

## Missouri Events

The fire management staff at Mark Twain National Forest are the driving forces of the program in the Missouri area. In 1992, the Mark Twain National Forest participated (and will also do so in 1993) in six area rodeos. These included the Cape Girardeau Shrine Club Rodeo, the Licking Chamber of Commerce Rodeo, the Sikeston Jaycee Bootheel Rodeo, the



Eminence Rodeo, the Auxvasse Rodeo, and the American Royal Rodeo. The American Royal Rodeo, held in Kansas City's Kemper Arena, is one of the Nation's largest rodeos and kicks off each new rodeo season. Smokey's participation in these rodeos included shopping mall appearances, "meet Smokey" times before each rodeo performance, rodeo parades, and nightly arena appearances. Altogether, this year's program has brought Smokey's fire prevention message to well over 400,000 people in Missouri.

Acceptance of the program has been enthusiastic. Many of the

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**Beginning in 1990, Mark Twain National Forest in Rolla, MO, has been using the rodeo to deliver a special fire prevention message through the Smokey and the American Cowboy program.**

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cowboys have become supporters and fans of Smokey and lend their time to help promote fire prevention. Several of last year's World Champions have taken the time to autograph Smokey and the American Cowboy promotional materials that were handed out to rodeo fans. Even Ty Murray, the three-time World All-Around Cowboy

and current front runner for another title, took time between his bareback, saddle bronc, and bull riding to sign posters and cards. With all the support the program has received from the rodeo cowboys association, rodeo committees, and the public, the program's potential east of the Mississippi River is exciting. Hopefully, the Smokey and the American Cowboy program in Missouri and surrounding area will continue to grow and become the standard of wildfire prevention that it is in the West. ■



# Continuing Success Story of Training Wildland Firefighters

Denny Bungarz and Richard C. Wharton

*Training coordinator and administrator, National Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program, Sacramento, CA*



From January 1990 to the end of 1991, 361 men and women from the USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe have entered the National Fire Fighting Apprenticeship and Training Program (NFFJATP) in Sacramento, CA. The Forest Service and BLM firefighters come from Oregon, Washington, Nevada, California, Utah, Idaho, Montana, and Arizona. The tribe lives in northern California.

In those 2 years, four groups took the basic training course. The program consists of a 4-week basic academy that covers:

- Wildland firefighting safety
- Fire behavior
- Use of tools
- Physical fitness training
- Introduction to hazardous materials



*Fireline construction training at the basic apprentice academy managed by the National Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program at Sacramento, CA. Photo credit: Denny Bungarz, NFFJATP.*



*First responder first-aid training at the basic apprentice academy managed by the National Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program at Sacramento, CA. Photo credit: Denny Bungarz, NFFJATP.*

Following this intensive program, the graduates enter a 16-working-month agency or tribal apprenticeship program. Their apprenticeships require 600 hours of manipulative and classroom training as well as supervised experience fighting fires. A 4-week advanced academy follows the apprenticeship program. Once the apprentices have completed the 18 months' training and apprenticeship, they become journeyman wildland firefighter specialists. (Apprentices with appropriate wildland firefighting experience receive credit, not to exceed 6 months, so a number of individuals become journeymen within 12 working months after the basic training.)

In the spring of 1992, officials from the agencies and the tribe had a number of questions about the success of the program. To answer these and other questions, the NFFJATP offered to conduct a survey. In March 1992, the survey was sent to fire management officers in the BLM and the Forest Service. (The Hoopa Valley tribe contracts for the NFFJATP training through the Forest Service.) The survey requested information about agency and tribal apprentices still in the program, apprentices who left the program before attaining journeyman status, and the present occupation of those who had become journeymen. The results of the survey are in table 1.



**Table 1—Breakdown of data on NFFJATP enrollees**

Group	Number of basic academy graduates	Number converted to journeyperson	Number still active	Number transferred to another agency or to tribe	Percent left program*
1 (1990)	107 **	80	15	2	11 (n=12)
2 (1991)	90	8	76	1	7 (n=6)
3 (1991)	86	3	71	0	1 (n=12)
4 (1991)	78	0	78	0	0
Total	361	91	240	3	8 (n=30)

\*Thirteen apprentices were removed from the program for the following reasons: absence without leave, failed step test, and inferior performance. Seventeen apprentices resigned for the following reasons: health, legal problems, return to school, better job and pay, or moved out of agency jurisdiction.

\*\*Although 111 signed up for the program, 4 did not start the training program.

### Journeypersons Converted

By the spring of 1992, the 88 apprentices from the Forest Service and BLM who had become journeypersons had the following fire positions:

- 58—GS-462-5, Assistant Fire Engine Operator, Lead Crew Member
- 8—GS-462-5, Fire Engine Operator
- 6—GS-462-5, Hot Shot Crew Member
- 5—GS-462-5, Hand Crew Member, Fuels
- 5—GS-462-5, Fire Prevention Technician
- 2—GS-462-5, Helitack Crew Members
- 1—GS-462-5, Dispatcher
- 1—GS-462-7, -9, -11, District Fire Management Officer Trainee
- 2—GS-455-5, Engine Operator

One person from the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe had a position equivalent to a GS-462-6, Station Foreman, and two were equivalent to GS-462-5, Firefighters.

### Transfers

As shown in table 1, three individuals transferred to other agencies or the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe. One Forest Service apprentice transferred to the BLM and another to the tribe—both continued in wildfire positions. The third transferee did not take a fire position but became a GS-462-5, Cultural Technician, for the BLM.

Of those who had transferred from one forest to another (not shown in table), three have become GS-462-5, Assistant Fire Engine Operators or Fire Engine Operators.

**A high percentage of employees selected for the NFFJATP remain in wildland firefighting careers with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe.**

### Analysis of the Data

Analysis of the data indicates about 8 percent of the apprentices left the program prior to reaching journey-person status. The data also show that gender and ethnic background have no bearing on whether or not a person leaves the program.

Of those reaching journeyperson status, most are in GS-462-5, Forestry Technician, positions in wildland fire occupations. Few people completing the program left Federal or tribal service. Of those transferring to other agencies or the tribe, all of the journeypersons remain in the wildland fire occupation. Of the transfers from one forest to another or BLM district to another, all but one of the apprentices or journeypersons still have careers in wildland firefighting.

This survey shows a high percentage of employees selected for the NFFJATP remain in wildland firefighting careers with the agency and forest or BLM district where they began or with the tribe. The percentage of apprentices removed or resigning from their positions is low. The investment agencies are making in a basic wildland firefighting program is paying dividends in employee retention. In addition, supervisors have remarked that the self-esteem and enthusiasm of the



*Fire shelter practice at the basic apprentice academy managed by the National Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program at Sacramento, CA. Photo credit: Denny Bungarz, NFFJATP.*

## A Brief History of the Training Program

In 1990, the Pacific Southwest Region was under a consent decree and civil rights policy directive to diversify the work force of the USDA Forest Service. To meet this goal in fire management, the Pacific Southwest Region selected the National Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program (NFFJATP) to assist in recruiting and training apprentice female and minority firefighters.

The NFFJATP put 107 prospective firefighters through a 4-week intensive training program early in 1990. At graduation, the enthusiasm among the enrollees was the highest long-time

Forest Service employees had seen in years—107 enrollees had completed the coursework. (For more information, see Fire Management Notes 51(3):3-4.)

By the end of 1991, 254 others entered the program from the Forest Service and other agencies and the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe. According to various issues of the "California Log," Forest Service Pacific Southwest's newsletter, a number of these graduates have already received performance and special act awards. The accompanying article shows how successful this program has been in training individuals for firefighting careers in the agencies that paid for their training.

trained firefighters has remained high.

We suggest that a similar survey be taken in a few more years to observe the movement of journeypersons as they become available for promotion.

## The Future of the Program

In April 1992, the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region and the BLM through the California State Office entered into a 3-year agreement with the NFFJATP to continue the program. In addition, the NFFJATP coordinated a training program designed to upgrade about 89 Region 5 employees in the wildland firefighting area. This academy was conducted in November of 1992 for individuals at the GS-462-4 level; when this training was completed, they were promoted to the GS-462-5 level.

The fifth group to enter the NFFJATP began its basic academy on February 9, 1993. NFFJATP has a continuing process of recruiting candidates for these classes and expects that this process will produce some 600-plus qualified male and female firefighters from a variety of ethnic backgrounds by 1996.

For further information about the program, contact the NFFJATP at 916-648-3000. ■





# Partnerships—Making Them Work in Times of Limited Resources

Glenn A. Carowan, Jr.

*Refuge manager, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Cambridge, MD*



The wildland fire protection community for years has enjoyed the benefits of teamwork. Teamwork has been an integral part of wildland fire suppression—from the unifying of individual efforts of the fire crew to the more complex and difficult-to-achieve synergy derived from hundreds of staffers of different backgrounds pulling together to achieve a common goal on a campaign fire. It thus seems only natural, and certainly prudent, that more agencies and organizations could capitalize on this special ability to work together during difficult times, channeling teambuilding skills and abilities into their fire protection and fire management plans. This approach is particularly appropriate for presuppression activities, equipment preparedness programs, and suppression efforts.

## A Challenge to Greater Demands, Shrinking Resources

The Honorable Curt Weldon from Pennsylvania's Seventh District stated in his address at the first forest fire prevention conference, Fire Prevention for the 1990's, "If we could ever unite this force, there's no limit to what we could achieve in terms of dealing with your concerns and making your job easier." As chairman of the Congressional Fire Service Caucus, Congressman Weldon was primarily speaking about participation in the political and legislative processes, but his message can be equally applied to unifying all fire community participants and their benefactors into partnerships. These partnerships will not only generate the political clout and justification to continue the

excellent job that the public has come to expect, but will also allow better and more efficient use of limited resources in times of tight budgets.

Congressman Weldon issued a challenge for all those in the fire community. Some have heard the message and have acted, while others have not. For those who have seen budgets slashed, staff reduced, and procurement of important materials and equipment suspended while simultaneously experiencing greater and greater wildland fire problems and growing responsibilities with wildland-urban interface fire protection, the experience described here relates how some agencies and organizations are "making it happen" regardless of the fiscal constraints and hardships. The answer is partnerships.

## Fire Planning Workshop Jump-Starts Collaboration

On June 25, 1991, the Maryland Public Land's Forestry Division, in cooperation with the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), cohosted the Comprehensive Fire Planning workshop. The workshop was organized to solicit input from the public, representatives from local and State government, elected officials, DOI FWS and National Park Service, Maryland Forestry Division, Maryland Park Service, Chesapeake Forest Products Company, and Glatfelter Timber Company on the best approach for providing wildland fire protection in Maryland's Eastern Shore. The area to be serviced included Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico,

Somerset, and Worcester Counties.

While participants readily agreed that the common goal was "to provide the best resource management and protection possible in the Eastern Region of Maryland at the least cost to government agencies, industry, and private citizens," they unanimously agreed the only way this was to become a reality was to develop an interagency-industry partnership for wildland fire protection; in effect, a scaled-down compact.

## Creating a Compact

Specific objectives were defined for the workshop:

- To enhance relations between cooperating fire management agencies and participating forest product companies
- To determine the status of current and future fire management programs and activities, preparedness to deal with prescribed burning and wildfires, availability and compatibility of equipment, unit strength, and types and condition of specialized equipment
- To develop a comprehensive fire management plan that will address "how we can cooperatively reach our goal with the use of combined resources."

## Pooling Equipment, Spawning New Ideas

Over 50 people from these various government agencies, the timber industry, and the public, including several elected officials, attended the meeting. The representatives of each of the agencies and timber companies

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spoke about fire preparedness status and needs in their organizations. They summarized their equipment and unit strength capabilities for cooperating with the Maryland Forestry Division in the event of a severe wildfire.

More importantly, the meeting generated a spirit of teamwork that was subsequently channeled into developing a comprehensive wildland fire protection plan for the lower six-county area of the Eastern Shore and creating the Delmarva Fire Management Group. It also spawned new ideas and provided a forum for the representatives of the various organizations to meet and interact for a common cause.

The meeting also identified new players, such as Assateague National Seashore and the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, which had not been actively involved in wildland fire suppression in the past. Major benefits were derived by consolidating the identified resources and capitalizing on the special skills and talents of the various individuals. As a result, all of the participants created a closer working team that was prepared and equipped to provide better fire protection at less cost than if they operated independently.

### **Capitalizing on Consolidation, Uniting Forces**

For agencies and groups that have not tried this approach to "making it work with less," it is highly recommended you do so. Even if you don't have less, it is still highly recommended that you capitalize on the consolidation of available resources

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**When budgets are tight, one alternative is to forge partnerships that capitalize on the consolidation of available equipment, pooling of resources, and collaboration of government and business.**

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and do some conscientious planning. For example, by developing a fire management cooperative agreement with FWS, Maryland's Forestry Division was able to unite forces with the federally administered Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. As a result, a better fire protection program was developed for the area around the refuge because of careful planning on the part of both the refuge manager and the Maryland Forestry Division's supervisory staff.

### **Cutting Out Duplication**

Duplication of effort has been eliminated because the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and Maryland Forestry Division are communicating, and acting and reacting to a plan. One of the best illustrations of this is in the acquisition of equipment critical to both wildland wildfire suppression and to fire suppression in the arson-plagued marshes of Dorchester County. While the Maryland Forestry Division purchased an all-terrain marsh vehicle specifically designed for plowing firelines, the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge acquired a similarly manufactured machine, but one that would be dedicated to use with a foam-equipped, 250 gallon (946 L) slip-on pumper unit and dump cargo area for

transporting materials and supplies to isolated fires. The two agencies share the equipment. Other mutually complementary actions, like combining training courses and implementing large-scale aerial ignition for presuppression, are also being effectively used by the State and the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Teamwork, the Key Element**

With the completion of a new comprehensive fire preparedness and dispatch plan that is now being developed by the newly formed Delmarva Fire Management Group, the Maryland Forestry Division, Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Chesapeake Forest Products, Glatfelter Timber Company, Assateague National Seashore, State wildlife management areas, State parks, and private landowners can and will be the real beneficiaries. They will benefit from the teamwork developed to overcome the growing deficits in fire suppression and presuppression resources.

The dollars and staff hours are simply no longer adequate to allow the problems of wildland fire suppression to rest on the shoulders of any one agency. We must, therefore, begin to rely more on each other and to develop the kind of teamwork we know can be effective in wildland fire protection. We in Delmarva know it works, and we think other jurisdictions will find it works, too. ■

## NWCG Information Resource Management Working Team

The interagency fire community currently lacks a connected and coordinated information management system. For example, the Forest Service collects weather information according to its standards and guidelines, but that information neither may be in a format or system a State fire system can use nor accessible through that system.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) recognized the challenge of bringing quality information in the right form to the right people at the right time to support sound and deliberate decisions and generate ideas. On August 28, 1989, NWCG chartered the Information Resource Management Working Team (IRMWT) to begin to address interagency fire information management.

The mission of IRMWT is "to identify policy-level information issues that affect . . . interagency fire management activities and to provide advice to the NWCG members on how to address those issues." The IRMWT consists of representatives from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection; USDA Forest Service; and Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service. The membership is a cross-section of computer analysts, research scientists, and program managers.

An aggressive program of work for the IRMWT has been proposed for the next 3 years in the following areas:

- Develop an interagency information management strategy
- Sponsor an NWCG conference on information management
- Complete the transition of INCINET (Incident Command Network) from program design to field use

The IRMWT recognized that having and managing useful information in the interagency fire community is critical. Your comments are welcome. Contact any of the following team members with your ideas:

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Division of Fire and Aviation  
Management  
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**Stephen F. Pedigo**, *branch chief,*  
*USDA Forest Service, Fire and*  
*Aviation Management, Fire*  
*Information Resource Management*  
*and Planning, Washington, DC*



## Wildland Firefighters, Thank Jerry Jeffries— Recipient of the GEICO Public Service Award for Fire Safety—for Many of Your “Lucky Stars”

Jerry M. Jeffries, USDA Forest Service Northern Region fire and aviation safety manager, received the Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO) 1992 award for his contribution to fire safety and accident prevention. His work in safety and accident prevention is what lies behind many of those firefighting “accidents that never happened.” The award recognizes his dedication to fireline safety, his expertise in recognizing hazards, his development of training materials on safe use of equipment and survival standards, and his skill in communicating what he knows to top-level decisionmakers and to firefighters. Ultimately, his contribution is closeup and personal to firefighters—reducing injury or saving lives.

Jeffries is the second Forest Service employee in 2 years honored by GEICO for achievements in fire safety and accident prevention. Last year, Dr. Stuart E. “Ted” Putnam, Missoula Technology and Development Center, received the award.

### What Did He Do?

**“Standards for Survival.”** After the 1990 Dude Fire fatalities, the Director of Fire and Aviation Management directed that the training course “Standards for Survival” be taught to all fireline personnel, and, based on Mr. Jeffries’ recommendation, taught to all fire site personnel in the Northern Region. He conducted instructional sessions for onsite trainers



*The 1992 GEICO Public Service Award winners at the March 1, 1993, awards ceremony, U.S. Botanic Gardens Conservatory. From left to right, William B. Snyder, chairman, GEICO; award winners Jerry M. Jeffries, USDA Forest Service; Mary Ann Andrews, Office of U.S. Attorney; Dr. Jessie K.M. Easton, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs; Dr. George W. Brooks, NASA at Langley Research Center; and Jerry A. Jones, U.S. Postal Service; and Representative Steny H. Hoyer (MD). Photo credit: GEICO.*

## The Geico Award Public Service Award

The Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO), founded in 1936 to serve Federal employees, each year selects four career civil service employees and one retired Federal employee for outstanding achievements in the fields of substance abuse prevention and treatment, fire prevention and

safety, physical rehabilitation, and traffic safety and accident prevention.

The nominations come from Federal departments, independent agencies, and offices in the executive branch. They are screened by a nomination committee and chosen by a selection committee. The \$2,500 awards are presented to the recipients at a reception in Washington, DC.

at all Northern Region forests and job corps centers, which resulted in survival training for over 5,000 employees, contractors, and operators during the last 2 years.

**Project Leader—National Tractor Plow-Fireline Dozer Instructional Materials.** Designated as project leader for the development of the National Tractor Plow-Fireline

Dozer instructional materials, he and a group of technical experts from California, Florida, Wisconsin, and South Carolina designed a national training video and workbook that concentrates on the personal protective equipment, communication, strategy and tactics, management and supervision, and training of personnel involved in the dangerous fireline activity of tractor plow-fireline dozer operation.

**Chain Saw Safety Training Program.** From analysis of accident data, Jeffries determined the Forest Service needed a training program in the safe operation of chain saws on the fireline. He spearheaded the formation of an interagency committee to design and implement a Chain Saw Safety

Training Program that has been taught to over 200 operators in the Northern Region in 1992 and has been adopted by other firefighting units outside the region.

**Wildland Fire Safety Knowledge.**

Jeffries is a nationally recognized expert on wildland fire safety who often, at the request of a region or the Washington Office, briefs fire managers and field firefighters on fire hazard situations and safety measures and serves as a fire accident investigator. He also is the Northern Region safety troubleshooter during major fire occurrences, who looks for the broad picture in safe firefighting performance.

**Tetratorch Guidelines.** Jeffries personally developed the guidelines

for the use of tetratorch and teaches 8 to 10 fire safety courses a year at the Northern Region Interagency Fire Training Center.

**The Legacy**

Jeffries' work and dedication to firefighting safety has increased safety awareness throughout the wildland fire community, the accountability for safety in firefighting at all levels of interagency wildland firefighting organizations, and safe conditions for firefighters who put to use safe techniques and procedures working the fireline. ■

**Doris N. Celarier**, *writer-editor,*  
*USDA Forest Service, Public Affairs*  
*Office, Washington, DC*

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